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FOR
MANUSCRIPTS

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Hunting for Manuscripts.

A World-Wide Search
for Canadian
Craft Documents.

An Entertaining Interview
between Bro. Morang and
M. W. Bro. J. Ross Robertson,
the Canadian Masonic Historian



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HUNTING FOR MANUSCRIPTS.

The last time I had a talk with Bro. Ross Robertson about matters Masonic was on a sunny day in the early part of June of 1900, while we were comfortably seated in deck chairs on board the Cunard liner "Lucania."

I had a lot of writing to do the next day and, consequently, a promise made by Bro. Robertson to tell me something about his collection of Masonic manuscripts, more especially those connected with the "History of Freemasonry in Canada," did not materialize. Another contributory reason for the non-fulfillment of the promise was that I had a day's packing to do before landing at Queenstown, and all Atlantic travellers know what that means. And I had more than myself to look after.

So I disembarked at Queenstown and

Bro. Robertson went on to Liverpool, and I had half made up my mind that I should have to wait until I met the Past Grand Master in Canada before I could hear the rest of his interesting story.

The fates, however, were kind. I whirled through Ireland and crossed over from Belfast to Glasgow and north—yes, away up to the Lewes, the islands which as schoolboys we knew as the Hebrides—and after a pleasant passage across the Minch—it's generally a rough trip—I landed at Stornoway, the chief town of the island of Lewes.

What made my trip of more than ordinary interest was the discovery, in a chat with some friends at the Imperial Hotel, that Bro. Robertson was even known here in this far northern region. My friend, who was a member of Fortrose Lodge under the Grand Lodge of Scotland, warranted in Stornoway in 1767, took me by surprise when he said that Bro. Robertson's grandfather, a Mr. Hector Sinclair, had lived there from about 1796 until about 1823, and that he had been a member of that lodge for over twenty years.

"Yes," said the brother, "your Past Grand Master's mother was born a

hundred years ago in the old farmhouse on Goathill, and it is just one hundred and two years since her father was made a Mason in Fortrose Lodge. We see Bro. Robertson every two or three years and he is always welcome."

I had some business in the town and after a day's rest I went south to London, thence to Paris and down to Munich and Oberammergau to see the Passion Play. I had a day or so at Zurich, and then by the advice of a friend I headed for the highest, driest and one of the sunniest health resorts in Europe—the Engadine of Switzerland, where they have air as asceptic as it is made, where germs and dust do not corrupt and where you are protected from winds by the ranges of Alps that vary in height from 10,000 to 13,000 feet in height. I found this at St. Moritz after a ten hours' jaunt in a Swiss diligence over the Julier Pass of the Bernese Alps.

I arrived in the evening, rather tired after the drive and turned in early. The next morning I was up with the lark, threw open my window in the Bavier Hotel, and as I did so, much to my surprise, I saw Bro. Robertson and his son evidently taking a consti-

tutional before breakfast. My lungs did good service at that moment and we renewed our friendship of the Atlantic liner at our breakfast an hour later.

Here you have two breakfasts—one small and early, a cup of coffee and bread and butter—and at eleven o'clock you have your meat breakfast.

This morning I had my first Alpine climb. Bro. Robertson said a short climb would give me an appetite for my second breakfast and I, therefore, assented most willingly to accept the P. G. M. as a guide. Yes, it was a short walk if you take it on the level, but when it means a walk up a slope that eventually brings you about 800 feet above your starting point, then it is no mild task. We started out, Bro. Robertson's son, leading the way, the pater came next and then "yours truly."

I do not believe that Bro. Robertson has any malice in his composition, nor do I think he would deliberately invite me to perform a sort of hari kari, as they do in Japan, but no more Alpine short walks for me just at the present writing, for I am jotting this all down an hour after my return to the hotel.

But I am anticipating. Bro. Robert-

son's son, young and vigorous, shot upwards like a veteran Alpine guide and his paternal relative kept close behind him. Talk of the highest degrees in the Craft—I was getting all the degrees I wanted for all time. The route to the Habensee, or the peak that rises about 800 feet above St. Moritz, is given as an hour and a half walk. I had an idea that Bro. Robertson said half an hour. But the half hour passed and our feet kept moving. Every half-hour we rested by the wayside on benches which some kind spirit had placed by the path, and finally in nigh two hours' time we saw the national flag of Switzerland floating over the upper plateau of land, and just two hours from our start rested in the bandbox restaurant that private enterprise had placed upon the top of this mountain peak.

A two hours' rest revived my wearied frame, and while Bro. Robertson's son went off exploring I sat, and over a cigar and a cup of delicious coffee reminded Bro. Robertson of his promise to tell me of his quest for manuscripts, without which his exhaustive work could not have been written.

"I'm afraid," said he, "that I hardly realized all that that promise meant."

"How so?"

"Well, while it's an easy task to talk of hunting for pictures, it's rather difficult to tax one's memory regarding manuscripts."

"Why, it seems to me that you would remember where you found your manuscripts much more readily than where you found your pictures."

"Not at all. That's just where you are mistaken. A picture, you know, once seen, impresses itself on the mind, doubly so if you are interested in the subject. You can take in the whole perspective at a glance. You, so to speak, size up the scene—if it's a landscape—so much so, that if you are handy with a pencil you can make a rough drawing of it from memory. As I say this I think of a sketch of Halifax, Nova Scotia, which I found one morning in the British Museum as I turned over a number of maps issued about 1760. It was a rare find—fancy Halifax in 1750. It was just a village and yet Masonry was founded in Nova Scotia before Halifax was thought of. The founder was Erasmus J. Phillips, a British officer in the garrison at

Annapolis. He was initiated in the first lodge at Boston in 1737 and on his return to Annapolis founded a lodge. That was about twelve years before Edward Cornwallis, the first Governor of Nova Scotia, obtained a warrant from Phillips for Lodge No. 1, Nova Scotia. Bro. Edward Cornwallis was a brigadier-general and an uncle of Lord Cornwallis of Yorktown fame."

"Are there any traces of Phillips' work?"

"None whatever. We know that he was made a Mason in Boston and he appears to have been Provincial Grand Master of Nova Scotia as early as 1750, for in that year he was addressed by Bro. Cornwallis and others as such when they asked for a warrant for a lodge at Halifax. Phillips lived at Annapolis and undoubtedly held a lodge there, but of this there are no records. I have searched everywhere without finding the slightest trace of his work prior to 1750."

"Did you ever come across a picture of Cornwallis? I mean Edward—"

"No, never. He was never engraved nor put on canvas. The same of Bro. Thos. Carleton, the first Governor of New Brunswick. His picture can't be found; neither can that of Col. Simon

Fraser, of the 78th Highlanders, be found. He was the eldest son of old Lord Lovat. Anyone who has the picture of any one of these three can get his own figure for them. Fraser, you know, was the Provincial Grand Master that instituted the officers of the lodge at Quebec in 1759."

"What about Upper Canada manuscripts? Those are more directly connected with your history."

"That is just what I am thinking about. I have so many that I scarce know where to begin. Why, the manuscripts of the first three Provincial Grand Lodges that worked in Upper Canada from 1792-1858 are in my library. They fill very comfortably about ten portfolios of a hundred pages each and all these are classified and indexed—yes, and type-written. This does not include the manuscript minutes of a hundred and twenty of the pioneer lodges, such as Zion Lodge, No. 10, of Detroit, that was under Canada from 1794-1805."

"Why, was Zion not an American lodge?"

"Yes, after 1805, but from 1794 until the close of that year it worked under a warrant granted by the Provincial

Grand Lodge of Lower Canada at Quebec."

"Was there a Zion Lodge at Detroit prior to 1794?"

"No, the first Zion Lodge was that warranted by the Grand Lodge of Lower Canada. There were lodges in Detroit from 1764, but they were all known as 'Lodges at Detroit in Canada.' In 1785 there was a 'Harmony' Lodge and in 1787 a lodge called 'No. 1, New York.' Bro. William Hull, the Governor of Michigan, was a member of Zion, and in May of 1807 he entertained the lodge at his residence in Detroit. Of course, our American friends criticize Hull for surrendering Detroit in 1813, but nevertheless he was a good Mason and popular with the brethren."

"Are the old Craft warrants of Michigan in existence?"

"Yes, very much so. The military warrant of 1764, held in the 60th Regiment and issued by Bro. George Harrison of New York, when he was Provincial Grand Master, was for a hundred years in the archives of the Grand Lodge of New York and the Zion warrant of 1794 was in the same keeping for about ninety years. Through the efforts of R. W. Bro.

Ehlers, the Grand Secretary of New York, both these documents were sent to Zion Lodge by order of the Grand Lodge of that State. For many years the 1764 warrant was missing. It had been put away by Bro. Austin, a former Grand Secretary of New York, and search was frequently made for it but without avail. Bro. Ehlers had never seen the document and was satisfied that it was not in any of his safes nor in the fire-proof strong room, where he keeps his documents of value. During my frequent visits to New York I had many an entertaining chat with the Grand Secretary. Once I suggested to him that the old warrant was 'somewhere' among his treasures, reminding him of the fact that Bro. John Barker, of New York, the former Grand Librarian, and the late Bro. Herman Carter had both declared that it was in the Grand Secretary's office after Bro. Austin's death. On one occasion I spent a morning in his office turning over scores of dusty old parchments, warrants of old New York lodges that had ceased work. When I got through my hands were as black as the ace of spades and I had to confess that I was beaten, so much so that Bro. Ehlers smiled at my wasted time.

and said: 'Bro. Robertson, I told you so.' But all things come to him who waits. I always insisted that the warrant would turn up; indeed, I often wondered how the Grand Secretary stood my frequent reminders, for I was very persistent. But Ehlers is a prince in good nature and only expressed a wish that some day my 'hope deferred' would be realized. Well, sure enough it was. A brother from the northern part of New York called on Bro. Ehlers one morning about three years ago to talk about American Masonic history, for the Grand Secretary is well informed and most interesting on all that concerns the early history of the Craft in the state. During the conversation Ehlers said: 'New York is the only state that has a provincial warrant from England and I have it in the safe.' 'Let me see it,' said his friend. 'I will,' replied Ehlers, and with this stepped briskly to the strong room and opened one of the safes. Armed with his precious parcel he returned to the Grand Master's room where his friend was sitting. Here he opened the large envelope, unfolded the provincial warrant and in doing so found another smaller parchment within the larger one. This he also opened, and what

do you suppose the smaller package was? Why, nothing but the long-lost Detroit warrant of 1764, which for safety had been carefully preserved within the folds of the Provincial Grand Lodge warrant for probably fifty years. Bro. Ehlers was more than delighted. The long-sought-for parchment had in due course turned up and, in accordance with a resolution of Grand Lodge was sent to Zion Lodge at Detroit. Thanks to Bro. Ehlers I have been able to reproduce the warrant full size in my history of Zion Lodge."

"What records have you of early Upper Canadian lodges?"

"I have the manuscript minutes of a few of the Niagara lodges from 1795, but the minute books of the first Provincial Grand Lodge are not to the fore. I have, however, a fair lot of the proceedings of the Provincial Grand Lodge at Niagara, for each lodge was supplied with a copy of these minutes. Then I have type-written copies of the minutes of Barton Lodge at Hamilton from 1796. I remember that they charged ten dollars for the first step.' Bro. Davenport Phelps was the first W.M. He was a great friend of Chief Joseph Brant. The old chief

visited the lodge and listened to a sermon preached by Phelps when he was W.M. Bro. Phelps was afterwards rector of an Anglican church at Geneva, N.Y. The papers and records of Barton Lodge are in splendid condition, all classified and indexed, thanks to R. W. Bro. A. T. Freed, of Hamilton. Then there is old No. 6 at Kingston, now Ancient St. John's. Its history is more perfect and continuous than any of the early lodges. It hasn't one break."

"Was not the Niagara district a good Masonic centre, with plenty of records?"

"Yes, in a way. The town of Niagara with all its old lodges has only the records of one private lodge, but Grimsby Lodge, No. 15, of 1799-1822—that was the lodge at the Forty Mile Creek—has complete records. This lodge did a little business on its own account. It bought two swarms of bees and went into the manufacture of honey. Two of the brethren managed the swarms and the profits were shared by the lodge. This lodge, however, ceased work from 1812-16 during the war. Union Lodge, which met at Ancaster and Dundas, had a short but eventful history. John Brant, a son

of the chief, was its secretary. I've given in my history fac-similes of his writing."

"Were all these manuscripts easily found?"

"Well, it was easy to find some of them and hard to find others."

"I suppose you found all the old minute books you wanted?"

"Yes, whenever a lodge had an old minute book I was always welcome to it. Rawdon Lodge, the first in Little York (now Toronto), had minutes that long since—perhaps fifty years ago—disappeared. I have a certified copy made by Bro. Alfio de Grassi in 1849, but even then four pages—the first four—are missing. Then I have the minutes of St. John's Royal Arch Lodge, No. 16, which met in Toronto in 1800, succeeding to the antiquity of Rawdon. My impression is that the first four pages of the minutes of Rawdon will never be found."

"But, Bro. Robertson, why is it more difficult to get manuscripts than pictures?"

"Now that is going back to the beginning. Well, in hunting for pictures you have a fairly well defined area for research. You have the great libraries of England, the British Museum

and the Guildhall in London, and you have the Lenox and Astor libraries in New York, and the library of Congress at Washington. The best library I know for my purposes is the library of the Grand Lodge of England. I found a number of Kingston Convention documents there, as well as volume upon volume of Masonic periodical literature for 1800-60. Then in Canada the library of Parliament at Ottawa has many books containing Canadian pictures of use in illustrating Masonic history. So has the Public Library at Toronto. The collection of Canadiania in the Toronto Library is the best in Canada—if not in the world. Then the Chateau Ramsey, the old residence of the Governors of Quebec, has a fine collection of steel engravings. My own collection has given me many of my best reproductions. I think I have about 10,000 Canadian pictures and portraits, so you see I have a fair number to select from. These include about 2,000 connected with Masonry. I have, as well, every picture—about a hundred—that Mrs. Simcoe made while in Canada from 1792-6. You have to hunt for these pictures if you want them. You can pick up a lot in the second-hand pic-

ture and book shops of London and New York and Paris. So that your quest is in the libraries, the shops and the private collections. The picture shops and old book stores have treasures in books and pictures. But that is the story I gave you on the 'Lucania' last June."

"What about manuscripts?"

"Well, hunting for manuscripts is a good deal like hunting for a needle in a haymow. You are never certain of your find until you have your hand on it. Canadian Masonic manuscripts have queer hiding places. Through the kindness of W. Bro. Sadler, the sub-librarian of the Grand Lodge of England, I obtained nearly three hundred manuscripts relating to Canada. Many of these had been put away in the vaults at Freemasons' Hall eighty or ninety years ago. Yes, some of them as early as 1800. In Canada I have had a lively search for hidden manuscripts.

"An old certificate of William Emery, issued by Lodge No. 9, Cornwall, one of the Jarvis lodges in 1799 was found between the leaves of a family Bible at Williamstown in Stormont County.

"The minutes of New Oswegatchie

Lodge, which met in Leeds County in 1787, were found in 1889 in the drawer of a cupboard in an old farm house near Augusta, in Grenville County. It is the best kept minute book I have seen prior to 1800. It is well worded, neatly penned and fruitful in incident."

"That lodge was on the Quebec Register, was it not? I remember that your history states that it was an American lodge. How could it be both American and Canadian?"

"Very easily. It was warranted as No. 7, New York, in 1783, and named Oswegatchie. It met at Ogdensburg, the Indian Oswegatchie, and about 1786 the warrant was removed across the river to Maitland, then known as New Oswegatchie. The lodge met there for a few months and afterwards at Elizabethtown in Leeds County. I am certain that I have traced correctly the history of No. 7. I submitted it to Bro. Ehlers, the Grand Secretary of New York, and he agreed with me that I had traced it step by step from its first opening to its final closing."

"Did you find much Quebec manuscript in your research?"

"Yes, I was most fortunate in my hunt for early manuscripts of Quebec

but I had to cross the seas for some of them.

"Bro. Kerr, of Ottawa, an old friend of mine now dead and gone, gave me six leaves of the minute book of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Quebec in 1787. These leaves contain the minutes of the Provincial Grand Lodge at Quebec in May, 1781, and record the granting of a warrant to St. James' Lodge, No. 14, at Cata-raqui, now Kingston. These leaves were found in a barrel full of waste paper in the backyard of a book-binder's shop in Quebec in 1850. They comprise the only known writings of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Quebec prior to 1800.

"But the rarest find of all was the certificate of Lieutenant Leslie, of Select Lodge at Quebec, issued in April, 1761. Bro. J. B. McLean, the publisher, of Montreal, put me on the track of this document. It was on parchment, fairly legible and with letters well formed, but I had to use a strong magnifying glass to decipher the names of the officers. The name of the secretary puzzled me; all that I could make out was 'Thos. He,' after which there was space for half-a-dozen letters, followed by the first and last

letters of the word secretary. I had almost given up the job, when I thought of what the camera might do, and it did all I wanted, for the photograph reproduced the apparently undecipherable words. The secretary's name was 'Heathsop.'

"Then I found the minutes of St. Peter's Lodge of Montreal, in that city. I forget the name of the brother who had them, but it was through the late Bro. Hutton that this find came. I suppose that if I ever write the history of the Craft in Quebec I will have to follow up the search in that province for more manuscripts."

"You said you had crossed the sea to get information about Quebec?"

"Well, when searching for Upper Canada Craft manuscripts I naturally came across matter of interest to Quebec. For instance, the original warrant of the Duke of Kent as Provincial G. M. of Lower Canada had never been found, that of Bro. Jarvis as Provincial G. M. of Upper Canada is in my collection, but a copy of the Duke of Kent's warrant is given in full in the minute book of the Athol Grand Lodge for 1792, in Freemason's Hall, London. No one seems to have dropped on to this until I had it copied and then photo-

graphed. The find cleared away a lot of doubt as to the exact powers given the Provincial G. M. of Canada by the Grand Lodge of the Ancients."

"Did you find anything more?"

"Yes, all the correspondence that had taken place between Quebec and England from about 1770 until 1820. Bro. Sadler unearthed the letters from a box full of papers that had apparently been put away for all time to come in one of the vaults at Freemasons' Hall. Bro. Sadler has been of invaluable assistance to me in my work."

"Where did you find the Jarvis warrant?"

"Well, the unexpected sometimes happens. One evening in January, 1899, a friend who knew of my hankering for Masonic manuscripts, called at my house to say that he knew where there was a trunk full of old papers, which had come from Niagara to Toronto just before the War of 1812, and which had not been opened nor indeed touched for nearly seventy years.

"'What,' said I, 'a trunk full of papers in Toronto and not opened for seventy years?'

"'Yes,' he replied, 'I'm told there is a trunk full of papers relating to Masonry, with minute books and parch-

ments galore not many miles from Toronto, and what is more you may have them.'

"'Man,' I said, 'this is a fairy tale. Where is this treasure box of paper and parchment?'

"'Not far—just an hour's drive from the city, and if you want them you must come with me to-night.'

"'Well,' I said, 'this is short notice and it's a cold night for even a seven mile drive, but if all you say is true I would drive seventy miles to lay my hands upon that trunk.'

"The sleighing was poor and the wheeling not much better, but the latter suited best and, leaving the lights of the city behind us, in a little over an hour we were inside an old-time dwelling resembling an early colonial farmhouse that had served, at least, sixty or seventy years of its day and generation. The man who occupied the farm was an intelligent old fellow. He was not a Mason, in fact, knew nothing about Masonry, but he said his grandfather used to attend lodge when the Masons met during the War of 1812, out at Barrett's Hotel at Newtonbrook, and at Mrs. Lawrence's on Yonge street near Hogg's Hollow.

"'Well,' I said, 'that occurred away

back in 1817. Did your grandfather tell you anything more?"

"No, but I remember him speaking of the time the Masons met in the old school-house in Market Lane in York. That was a long, long time ago."

"Yes," I said, "eighty years ago."

"Oh," he said, "my grandfather was a lad of twenty in those days."

"Well, how did you get this trunk full of papers that my friend has come after?"

"Well, to tell the truth I don't exactly know where they came from. I think it was Niagara—it might have been Kingston. I mind my grandfather saying that he went down to Capt. Richardson's house on Front and the old man told him that his instructions were to hand him over the trunk—it must have been late in the twenties or in the beginning of the thirties—anyhow it was the year that the old Frontenac was burnt at Niagara. Richardson was running the "Canada" steamer and she ran from York to Kingston and Niagara—so it may have been Kingston. I know that old man Richardson and his son, young Hugh, used to drive out to see my grandfather, and he told me that Richardson had said, in handing the trunk

over, that the Grand Lodge of Masons had broken up after the Morgan affair. That reminds me of old Humberstone driving over here from Yonge street and telling my grandfather that Morgan used to work on his farm near the second toll gate. However, we've had the trunk, it hasn't been opened since it came here and that's nigh seventy years ago.'

"'Has the trunk been here so long?"

"'Yes, the old man put it up in the attic room in the north gable, right under the window and one of my daughters, to make the room more presentable, for it was a sort of spare room, had the box covered with a bit of chintz and made a cushion filled with cotton batting on the lid, and so it was used for a seat for over twenty years.'

"'But did no one ever open the trunk?"

"'No—no one thought of what was in it. The grandfather some years before his death talked about the box full of old papers in the attic room, but no one thought of climbing the narrow stairway, for the room was only occupied at odd times when friends would come down from the north about fair time.'

"While the farmer was giving me all

this information my friend and one of the sons were getting down the long-forgotten trunk. I did not expect very much. Many a time I had had my hopes shattered in the search for manuscripts, but as soon as the trunk was uncorded and I opened it I felt sure that my ship had come home. Papers, books and parchments were there, yes and all genuine documents. A turn over of the papers, all endorsed and tied with red tape, a look into two or three of the manuscript books and a glance at a small circular tin box, a little larger than a penny, fastened to a sheet of engrossed parchment told me the whole story. The papers were correspondence with the Grand Lodge of England, the books were the minutes of some of the old Niagara lodges, and the tin box contained the red seal of the Athol Grand Lodge of England and was attached to the warrant of Bro. William Jarvis, just as he had received it from the Duke of Athol in 1792. That was what I found. That warrant had been kept out of sight from the day in 1796 when Bro. Jarvis came to Toronto. After his death in August, 1817, it was held by one of his relatives and Bro. H. T. Page, of Ancaster, obtained a copy of it in 1820.

But in 1821 it fell into proper hands. R. W. Bro. Robert Kerr, when the Provincial Grand Lodge was reorganized in 1822 by Bro. Simon McGillivray, obtained possession of the warrant and other papers and shipped them to Bro. McGillivray at York. This was in 1822. He, however, had left York for England, and the parcel sent to Bro. John Dean at Bath, eighteen miles from Kingston. He held them until the close of the second Provincial Grand Lodge in 1830, and, as there was then no Provincial body, they were given to the care of the old brother in whose former home I found them. So they had been there in the attic room for seventy years."

"You must have felt gratified by the result of your drive?"

"Gratified! I should say so. When I drove after midnight into Toronto I stopped at Bro. George J. Bennett's house, on Melbourne avenue, and wakened him out of a sound sleep and then I showed him my find."

"What did he say?"

"Don't ask me—what did he not say?"

"Now you know how I have hunted for Masonic manuscripts."

G. N. M.

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